



NORTHAMPTON ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

APPROVED MINUTES

July 11, 2019

Front Room, Senior Center
67 Conz St., Northampton, MA 01060
4:00 PM – 5:30 PM

Attendees: Richard Parisiliti, Adin Maynard, Bill Dwight, Louis Hasbrouck, Wayne Feiden, Alisa Klein, Ashley Muspratt, David Pomerantz

Facilitator: Chris Mason, Energy and Sustainability Officer

Scribe: Douglas Renick

Public Comment Period:

Lilly Lombard: I represent the Public Shade Tree Commission (PSTC). The PSTC received a \$30K grant for a project around the Hampton Parking Lot and the housing authority buildings. We planted over 300 trees this past year. We are just reviewing the Resilience and Regeneration Plan. We are certain that trees need to be included in the Plan in more detail. I have brought two articles (attached to minutes), one co-authored by Ben Weil. The Burncoat article looks at energy use following an incident of mass deforestation. The report indicates a 97% increase in energy consumption following tree removal. Overall there was a 38% increase in energy consumption in the city. The Journal Science says that planting trees is the cheapest and most effective way to lower carbon emissions. Keep trees in your lens as you complete the Plan.

Review/Approve Minutes of 5/9/19 meeting: Bill Dwight moved approval of the minutes and Wayne Feiden seconded the motion. Unanimous approval of the motion.

New NESC Commissioner: Mary Biddle is stepping off the Commission. Gordon Meadows is the possible new commissioner, which will be decided tonight by the City Council. Mr. Meadows shared his background and some of the knowledge and skills he will bring to the Commission if approved by the City Council.

EV Charging Stations: The Parking division will front money for two new dual-port charging stations. Utility incentives will reimburse us for most of the costs. These will both be ChargePoint brand charging stations with two new ports in the parking garage and two in the James House parking lot. Will they be free? To begin with yes but longer term that is still to be decided. How much are current chargers costing the city? Chris did gather data on the use of our original chargers at one time, but that just indicated hours used. He remembers that, at that time, the cost to the city was similar to the cost of running a traffic light. Free charging encourages people to come and shop, plus it helps us accomplish our environmental goals. The accounting should show the many benefits to the community that electric vehicles provide. There are incentives to municipalities to make charging stations available. The incentives usually come through DEP. There are building code standards that require a charging station--one station--which is not a lot.

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Climate Resiliency and Regeneration Plan:

Wayne: There is the Sustainable Northampton Plan, which was assessed three years ago. The Resilience and Regeneration Plan represents one of three areas identified as needed for the larger plan. The Resilience and Regeneration plan can stand alone and eventually it will be incorporated into the larger plan for the city. The framework for the plan includes the goal of carbon neutrality by 2050 and carbon budgeting for each department, i.e., how each department will get to the goal for 2050. In the city we have uncertified dikes. We are working on a grant to get that certification. There is a grant to look at storm water pipes. Generally, people read the broad framework and not the details. Two stakeholder meetings were held which included departmental staff, nonprofits, chamber of commerce, environmental justice groups. There were two community meetings. All of this input led to a draft put out for comment. The consultants working with us read and commented on the draft. That draft was further finalized. Now it goes to the NESC, the Planning Board and then to the City Council.

Comments from the NESC members: Do you need an endorsement tonight? No, August is fine. After the NESC signs off we go to a community meeting and then to the City Council. Wayne will not be here in August. The regular meeting date would be August 8. A quorum indicated that they could be here on that date. It's likely there will be a meeting in August. Wayne is back at end of August. The framework for the plan is usually good for 20 years. The details of the plan change much more frequently.

Lilly: Nature Conservancy resiliency mapping? Is it included? Wayne: Yes and no.

Alisa: It is important to include the resolutions passed by the City Council. Alisa will provide Wayne with a list. Community Choice Aggregation? It is included. Pesticide reduction work and the use of toxins in our environment are climate resiliency issues and should be included in the plan.

Adin: The energy section only relates to large buildings. We regulate everything over 2,000 sqft.

Smaller rental units are important. We need to show actual energy uses. There is a cost to getting good data. If appraisers are going to care about energy use the data is necessary.

Chris: There are no metrics and goals. The wording "further exploration" is seen as marching orders.

Key question: Is it worth the resources required to get good data? It's a balancing act.

Wayne: STAR communities metrics were used for the Sustainable Northampton Plan. Metrics: can we find data that is already being collected?

Wayne: I'm opposed to new resources going to collect the data for metrics.

Gordon: Focus on areas we actually control, e.g., we don't control fuel efficiencies of cars. We control the purchase of school boilers. We control city vehicles. We control lighting choices.

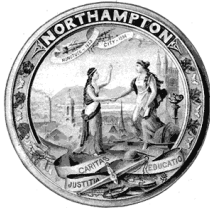
Adin: We are trying to change the future thinking ahead. We are part of state environmental goals.

Maybe in the future we'll be part of federal goals.

Café standards – we have to count on it even though we don't have control over it.

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Adin: what about more resources for Chris's office? Energy Resources are mentioned a lot in Resilience and Regeneration Plan. The city is going to have to spend more money. What resources will be needed to accomplish this plan?

Wayne: Staff and capital improvement levels will have to be addressed.

Lilly: The Energy Secretary had a round table. How much conversation was there with the state about these resources? Chris attended the round table, which focused on Senate Bill 10 to fund resiliency and vulnerability grants.

Chris: my position is now different in the city. To have me in Central Services – is that the right structure to be sure the document can be implemented?

Adin: We also have to consider the cost of not doing something.

Wayne: At a meeting in Ann Arbor there was a struggle to quantify the cost of sustainability.

Bill: We have gone through a political and cultural shift. Chris's position has changed. We are trying to be ahead of the curve. We need to have the community on board. That's a political issue. We can't do everything we want by declaration. We are further along.

Wayne: We are a middle-income community, not a wealthy community.

Gordon: Producing power with solar panels is cheaper than gas plants. So, electricity in the future will come from solar power. In replacing a boiler, we have to realize that the energy in the future will be different.

Lilly: Rejection of pipeline expansion should be reflected in the Plan.

Chris: The mayor has instructed staff to determine how to get buildings off fossil fuels.

Lilly: We planted 300 trees. How many trees were removed? Are we tracking this? Unless we have data, then we don't know if we are doing enough.

Adin: Restructuring Chris's office, perhaps including a person to collect and analyze data.

Wayne: We will create a dashboard. What's the dashboard that will bring the community on board. We know that people are more moved by positive information. Let me know.

Bill: There is a point of resistance when we need public support to move forward.

Chris: (has a page of feedback for Wayne – added as an addendum to minutes)

Adin: What's the city's role in capturing data that is available, e.g., in utilities, and then making it available to the community?

Alisa: Policies at the State and Federal level – can the city influence these entities? There is an educational piece, which activates young people to educate us as well as our teaching them.

Adjournment: Bill Dwight moved to adjourn and Richard Parisiliti seconded the motion. Unanimous approval.

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Strategies lack metrics or goals. On purpose? Reason?

Contrarily, the pathways include expectations for GHG reduction (Section 4)

Pg 39: If possible, break the Commercial and multifamily builds category into 1) institutional, 2) commercial, 3) multifamily. The reason, GHG reduction strategies and tactics are quite different for the three categories. It would be good to track them separately.

Under Pathways: should there be a paragraph or section discussing what level of resources will be needed, or would be appropriate to implement the strategies. IMHO, the pathways and strategies listed can't be accomplished in the timeframe called for with the current level of funding and resources.

Energy 1A: add in "with a focus (or goal, etc.) on GHG reductions"

- It is listed as a High Impact Strategy but the description describes a CCA 2.0 program (medium impact?) I think the cautious 2.0 description is more reasonable at this time. I suggest listing this as medium impact.

Energy 1B: I find this description confusing. – Two private sector solar arrays?? What does that refer to? How about all of the other private arrays installed in town? They are smaller but they add up. Do out-of-town arrays count? The city already has contracts for NMC that cover 70 – 80% of municipal electric load. (~ half from landfill array half from out-of-town array). Is this strategy for arrays on public land? Then why mention two private arrays. Is it for all arrays? Then why limit it to mentioning just two private arrays? Goal to match city's electric load – all of N'ton? Or just municipal. Is all of N'ton even possible within the boundaries of N'ton without significant efficiency improvements? What happens when we electrify everyone's heating systems?

Energy 1C: Insert Resiliency □ Community Clean Energy Resiliency Initiative. If the 2012 study is the Rivermoor study it is miss-identified.

Energy 1D and 2B are strategies for community outreach, one for PV and one for heat pumps. (Lead is energy resources). Energy 2E (Lead is Planning & S) includes outreach for energy efficiency – in fact it largely focuses on that – although it is introduced as protecting property against flooding and extreme weather.

Should the introduction for 2E be changed to outreach for EE improvement? Should it be split into two strategies – an energy efficiency outreach strategy and an overall resilience/regeneration strategy that refers to all three outreach strategies?

Outreach for energy efficiency should include collaboration with electric and gas utilities, local not-for-profit orgs, Community Action and local volunteers on outreach efforts. (Note, this might happen under Energy 1A but it is not mentioned there. Which I think is good. It should be a stand-alone strategy.)

Where possible, should the descriptions of all three of these outreach strategies parallel each other?

Energy 1D (Solarize)

- is described as on-going (e.g., “continue” write up says “allows” everyone). It should be described similar to the Heat Smart (Energy 2B) with the potential to expand it to include solar DHW or other technologies.
- Solarize offered an equitable access (PPA) that was promoted by the volunteers. We had, at most, 1 person sign up for it.
- During the time PPAs were being marketed aggressively the main hindrance was whether to trust the legal contract. Should part of this strategy be to provide free/low cost legal contract reviews?
- Resonant Energy is just a PPA marketed to low/moderate income homeowners. Has anyone vetted its contract before we mention them in this doc?

Energy 2A: Lead is Energy Resources – should it be co-led by P&S?

Energy 2D – Should Build Dept be part of lead for this?

Energy 3A – Should DPW, schools be co-leads on this?

Energy 3E – a question: What does “City’s limited gasoline carbon offset receipts” refer to?

Trans 1C: 4th bullet: is it ultimately the city’s responsibility to supply public EV charging stations? Should we add a bullet saying “Encourage development of a public EV charging station infrastructure owned and maintained by private businesses (e.g., utilities?).

And some misc. edits (e.g., 3.2 MW landfill PV array)